Meeting of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction

23 July 2014

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2014 Meeting
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Meeting of Experts
Geneva, 4-8 August 2014
Item 8 of the provisional agenda
Biennial item: how to strengthen implementation of Article VII, including consideration of detailed procedures and mechanisms for the provision of assistance and cooperation by States Parties

International organization that may be involved in the provision of and coordination of assistance relevant to Article VII

Addendum

Submitted by the Implementation Support Unit

World Health Organization (WHO)[1]

1. The WHO endeavours to provide guidance and support in preparedness, surveillance and response to public health events from any hazard to any Member State requesting it, in accordance with the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005). The IHR (2005) mandates WHO to respond to a public health event which may constitute a public health emergency of international concern, whatever the origin or source.

2. Additionally, if requested by the Secretary General of the United Nations, WHO would provide technical support in assessing public health, clinical, and event-specific health aspects of an alleged use of chemical, biological or toxin weapons, for example in the context of an investigation under the United Nations Secretary General's mechanism for investigation of alleged use.

[1] Information provided by WHO.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) [2]

Overview: OCHA's Mandate and BTWC Article VII

3. **Mandate**: The mandate of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is to bring together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. OCHA also ensures there is a framework within which each actor can contribute to the overall response effort.

4. **BTWC Article VII**: To assist states affected as a result of the use of biological and toxic weapons.

OCHA's role in an international response to a biological or toxin weapons incident

5. OCHA is responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors to ensure a coherent response to emergencies. The aim is to assist people when they most need relief or protection. A key pillar of the OCHA mandate is to "coordinate effective and principled humanitarian action in partnership with national and international actors". Operational coordination of humanitarian assistance includes assessing situations and needs; agreeing on common priorities; developing common strategies to address issues such as negotiating access, mobilizing funding and other resources; clarifying consistent public messaging; and monitoring progress. Humanitarian assistance is provided in accordance with the humanitarian principles.

6. In addition, OCHA's Emergency Services Branch can provide a range of specialised tools and services for sudden-onset international emergency response. In a sudden-onset emergency, and following a request for assistance from an affected government, OCHA can respond using the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) mechanism which enables it to deploy a team of experienced disaster responders to an emergency within 48 hours. In certain circumstances, and upon request of the affected country or the United Nations Resident Coordinator, as part of overall humanitarian assistance UNDAC can provide specialised services, such as:

- HazMat experts and technical modules to support local government with assessments, communications and the coordination of incoming international humanitarian assistance. The Hazmat experts would be equipped with intensimeters, dosimeters and sampling equipment for hazard-zoning.

- Environmental emergency experts and equipment to assist in mobilising and coordinating efforts to prevent or reduce the acute risks to human life and health, as well as the adverse effects on the surrounding environment.

- Providing advice to States on the deployment and use of foreign military and civil defence assets, which can include specialised personnel and equipment required for disaster relief operations, such as nuclear decontamination facilities, aircraft, helicopters, ships, field hospitals and water purification units. The Guidelines on the Use of Foreign Military and Civil Defence Assets in Disaster Relief (Oslo Guidelines) provide advice on how to ensure that foreign military and defence assets support and complement the relief operation without compromising principled humanitarian action.

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[2] Information provided by UNOCHA.